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United States
Department of
Agriculture

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Major News Releases and Speeches

June 17 - June 24, 1983

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U.S. Department of Agriculture • Office of Governmental and Public Affairs

USDA PROPOSES NEW PROCESSING SYSTEM FOR SURPLUS FOODS

WASHINGTON, June 16—The U.S. Department of Agriculture today proposed a new system which would allow the Food and Nutrition Service to ship USDA process and cheddar cheese, butter, nonfat dry milk, rice and honey directly to commercial food processors, for use in the manufacture of processed foods.

These foods then would be sold to eligible schools and charitable institutions at lower prices that reflect the value of the donated commodities contained in them.

Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Mary C. Jarratt said the new plan, called the "national commodity processing system" would make lower-priced processed foods available to schools and institutions which are not able to get them now.

Currently, surplus butter, nonfat dry milk, cheese, rice and honey are provided free to state agencies that contract with food processors to convert the surplus foods into items that are easier to use.

According to Jarratt, many food processors who market in several states do not participate in state programs because it would be necessary to negotiate separate processing agreements with each state. Some states do not have active processing programs. Because the new system requires a processor to sign only one agreement, USDA hopes more firms will elect to participate.

"Schools and institutions will be able to take greater advantage of surplus commodities that the government donates. They should get a wider variety of finished products made from the donated commodities. Processors will benefit by increasing their school and institutional sales and the government will be able to reduce its inventory of surplus foods," Jarratt said.

Interim regulations are in the June 17 Federal Register. Comments will be accepted until Sept. 15, 1983, by Gwena Kay Tibbits, chief,

program administration branch, food distribution division, Food and Nutrition Service, 3101 Park Center Dr., Alexandria, Va. 22302.

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USDA IMPROVES SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

WASHINGTON, June 17—The U.S. Department of Agriculture has finalized a comprehensive system for finding and correcting management problems in local school lunch programs, Assistant Secretary Mary C. Jarratt said today.

Called the assessment, improvement and monitoring system, the procedure fosters better overall management of the lunch program by states, monitors the use of federal funds, and protects the nutritional integrity of meals served under the national school lunch program.

The system has been operating on an interim basis since 1981 while USDA fine-tuned the procedures based on the practical experience of states implementing the plan.

Even on an interim basis, Jarratt said, "the new system has made a real difference in the effective management of the federal school lunch program." Previously, USDA had no nationwide program for monitoring school lunch management by states.

Under the final rule, states will perform on-site reviews or audits of all school districts on a periodic basis. They assess local program operations against designated performance standards and require corrective action if problems are found.

USDA has earmarked \$4 million annually in available state administrative expense funds to assist states in carrying out the system's requirements. These funds, as well as other funds provided to states by USDA for administering the school nutrition programs, can be withdrawn if a state fails to meet the requirements.

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COMMUNITY PLANNERS URGED TO TAKE NOTE OF USDA'S DUAL ROLE

NASHVILLE, Tenn., June 21—A U.S. Department of Agriculture official today urged the nation's community planners to recognize USDA's dual commitment to rural development and to American agriculture.

"A healthy agricultural economy and vital rural development are two sides of the same coin, and USDA is taking the lead to see that both responsibilities are carried out," said Willard Phillips, Jr., director of USDA's Office of Rural Development Policy.

Phillips spoke before the Small Town and Rural Planning Division of the American Planning Association in Nashville's Hyatt Regency Hotel during their annual meeting on planning and development. The group is composed of local, regional and state planning professionals.

"USDA is misperceived by many planners as being oriented solely toward the American farmer," said Phillips.

"The fact is," he said, "Congress gave this federal department responsibility to develop and implement a national rural development strategy for the total federal government. We have carried through on this mandate by preparing such a strategy—the first time that any administration has comprehensively done so."

That strategy, said Phillips, is set forth in "Better Country: A Strategy for Rural Development," which the administration submitted to the Congress in February, as required by the Rural Development Policy Act of 1980.

Phillips said rural America has grown faster than urban America, according to the Census Bureau, by 17 percent versus 10 percent for the cities.

"This tremendous growth makes us realize that planning for community growth is more important than ever before," he said. "In addition to the nation's farmers, there are 56 million other citizens in rural America and because of population trends, their number is growing by leaps and bounds. The nation's planners must respond to these needs by helping communities concentrate on the regional and county-wide levels."

"The USDA stands ready to assist planners by focusing on efforts to help local communities get their equitable share of available federal and private resources," Phillips said.

Phillips said Agriculture Secretary John R. Block had created a state-level coordinating body called Food and Agriculture Councils (FACs), made up of senior state USDA officials, and had given them direct responsibility for rural development.

Block also called for the creation of local or regional FACs to better work with local officials.

"These Councils," Phillips said, "are responsible to the secretary of agriculture. They have been directed to focus on the problems of commodity production and rural and community development."

Phillips called the new system a "major step" because regional planners can work within the FAC system in addition to dealing with individual federal agencies.

Other major initiatives cited by Phillips to demonstrate USDA's commitment to rural development include formation of the Office of Rural Development Policy and the establishment of a USDA-wide body, which is chaired by Under Secretary for Small Community and Rural Development Frank W. Naylor, Jr., to coordinate USDA's rural development efforts.

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USDA REQUIRES ALL IMPORTERS TO PAY DEPOSITS TO USE USDA QUARANTINE SPACE

WASHINGTON, June 22—Effective immediately, all importers will be required to pay deposits to reserve quarantine space at U.S. Department of Agriculture animal import centers, a USDA animal health official said today.

Previously only people who imported birds and poultry had been required to pay deposits to reserve space at USDA animal import centers, said John K. Atwell, deputy administrator of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

Atwell said deposits are needed to assure use of quarantine space once the importer has reserved it.

"Importers who reserve space and then fail to present animals for entry cost the government money in underused facilities and personnel and they're denying space to other importers," Atwell said.

Deposits will be \$130 per animal for horses and \$240 for each lot of livestock or zoo animals. Today's action increases the required deposit for each lot of birds from \$40 to \$80. Payment may be by personal or business check, certified check or U.S. money order by an importer or the importer's agent.

Atwell said the deposits are credited toward the fees importers pay to cover the cost of keeping birds, poultry, livestock or zoo animals in quarantine.

Deposits will be forfeited if importers fail to use the space they reserve.

USDA-operated animal import centers are located at Newburgh, N.Y.; Miami, Fla.; Honolulu, Hawaii; and at eight ports where facilities are maintained for imported birds only.

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ARKANSAS DECLARED FREE OF PINK BOLLWORM

WASHINGTON, June 22—Arkansas, and Natchitoches Parish, La., are free of the pink bollworm—one of the world's most destructive cotton pests—according to U.S. Department of Agriculture officials.

"The pest no longer occurs in these areas," said Dick Cowden, a plant protection officer with USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, "thereby freeing the state from quarantine and regulations for the pink bollworm."

Cowden said the pink bollworm spreads by hitchhiking via interstate transportation of certain cotton commodities and cotton harvesting and processing equipment and by migrating flights.

Commodities which require treatment and certification include: cottonseed, cotton lint and linters; used cotton processing bagging; and used cotton harvesting equipment.

The pink bollworm is capable of total crop destruction. Growers rely upon cultural methods as the principal control procedure. Federal, state and Mexican quarantines prevent artificial spread.

Pink bollworm quarantine and regulations remain in effect for Arizona, California, Louisiana, New Mexico, Nevada, Oklahoma and Texas.

Written comments concerning this interim rule will be accepted until Aug. 22, and should be sent to Thomas O. Gessel, Director, Regulatory Coordination Staff, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Room 728 Federal Building, 6505 Belcrest Rd., Hyattsville, Md. 20782.

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USDA PROPOSES RULE TO STOP SPREAD OF GYPSY MOTHS

WASHINGTON, June 22—The U.S. Department of Agriculture is proposing to regulate the movement of outdoor household articles—lawn furniture, camping equipment and garden tools—to prevent the interstate spread of the gypsy moth during household moves from infested to non-infested areas.

"We're proposing that all outdoor household articles being moved from a high risk gypsy moth area—generally the Northeastern states—into or through a non-regulated area, must be free of all gypsy moth life stages," said Bert Hawkins, administrator of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

"We're counting on people to cooperate with this program—don't take an old pest to a new neighborhood," Hawkins said.

Recent USDA surveys have shown that most new isolated infestations were started from egg masses moved on household items used or stored outdoors during the gypsy moths' egg-laying stage.

Under the proposal, people who are moving regulated outdoor articles will be responsible for making sure the items are free of gypsy moth egg masses, pupae—cocoons—caterpillars or adults. They may inspect their articles themselves or hire a USDA-trained commercial certified pesticide applicator, who is authorized to issue a certificate that will be recognized by state and federal plant protection officials.

Names of these qualified pesticide applicators may be obtained from state plant regulatory officials, county extension agents or USDA's

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Plant Protection and Quarantine officials.

Regulated items would include anything left outdoors, stored in areas open to the outside or articles stored indoors but used outdoors. General categories include recreational or camping items, building materials, yard and garden items and children's playthings.

Officials of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service will work with the states in monitoring people who are moving outdoor household articles out of the infested Northeast. USDA or state officials may inspect these items during the move or at their destination.

Under the proposal, people may be fined if they move any life form of the gypsy moth out of the generally infested Northeast if their articles are not accompanied by a certificate of inspection obtained before the move.

People who find gypsy moth egg masses should scrape the egg mass into a container of very hot water, household bleach, ammonia, kerosene or creosote, Hawkins said.

"Last year gypsy moth caterpillars defoliated more than 8 million acres of trees in the Northeast. This was down from the record 13 million acres defoliated in 1981," Hawkins said.

States designated as Gypsy Moth High Risk areas are: Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey and Rhode Island. Also designated as High Risk are parts of: Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, New Hampshire, New York, Pennsylvania and Vermont.

The proposal is scheduled to be published in the June 23 Federal Register. Comments will be accepted until July 13. Comments will be accepted by Tom Gessell, USDA, APHIS, Regulatory Coordination Staff, 728-FB, 6505 Belcrest Rd., Hyattsville, Md. 20782.

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GOAT VIRUS DISCOVERY COULD REVEAL CURE FOR HUMAN RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS

WASHINGTON, June 22—A newly discovered virus in goats may help scientists find out more about human rheumatoid arthritis.

Rheumatoid arthritis, the crippling disease afflicting millions of people, has long been thought—but never proven—to be caused by a virus that is gone before the symptoms appear.

Dr. D. Scott Adams, a veterinarian with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service, Pullman, Wash., said a research team has identified a virus—caprine arthritis-encephalitis—responsible for a similar disease in goats. It is the only virus to date that has been proven to cause chronic arthritis in mammals.

Now that the goat virus has been identified, it is being studied as an animal model for the human ailment, Adams said. "A better understanding of one could lead to a better understanding of the other."

According to the Arthritis Foundation, most rheumatoid arthritis first affects people in the prime of life—between the ages of 25 and 55. Sufferers with the disease have inflamed joints and the protective cartilage and the ends of joint bones are eaten away.

Adult goats infected by caprine arthritis-encephalitis can suffer from swollen, disfigured joints of arthritis and kids or young goats suffer from encephalitis and progressive paralysis.

But few goats—only about 3 percent in the United States—ever show any signs at all of the disease. Infected goats without symptoms can transmit the disease, thus posing a major problem for the U.S. goat industry.

Sometimes called "big knee disease," caprine arthritis-encephalitis may infect more than 80 percent of the U.S. domestic dairy goat population.

The disease, which surfaced in the late 60's, was identified in 1979 as a retrovirus—one that produces a disease only after a long incubation and persists throughout the life of the host.

"Though a vaccine against caprine arthritis-encephalitis has yet to be found," Adams said, "control measures have been developed." Using procedures developed through the experiments of his research team, he was able to bring the disease under control and prevent it from spreading.

Adams and co-researchers found that the disease is transmitted to goat kids shortly after birth—mainly through colostrum (the fluid mothers secrete for a few days after birth) and milk.

Research showed that heat can kill the virus without harming protective antibodies in the colostrum.

Separating kid goats from their mothers at birth and feeding them colostrum that has been heated for one hour at 56 degrees Celsius (133 degrees Fahrenheit) and pasteurized milk until they are weaned, Adams said, prevents further infections and can eventually eradicate the disease from a herd.

Contact between infected does and non-infected kids should be kept to a minimum, he said, since mothers could transmit the virus through their saliva and other secretions.

"We have no evidence at the present time that humans can be infected by the virus. However, we still recommend that goat milk be pasteurized in order to inactivate the virus," Adams said.

Adams' research team, based at Washington State University, cooperated with the rheumatoid section of the University of Washington's medical school in Seattle in discovering the virus.

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CONTACT: Dr. D. Scott Adams, veterinarian, Animal Disease Research, Washington State University, Agricultural Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Pullman, Wash. 99164. Telephone (509) 335-6661.

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MEAT PRODUCER FINED \$11,500 FOR SUPPLEMENTING INCOME OF INSPECTOR

WASHINGTON, June 22—Thomas J. Burke, president of Great American Veal, Inc., Newark, N.J., has been found guilty of 23 counts of supplementing the income of a U.S. Department of Agriculture official. Burke was fined \$500 and sentenced to three years probation on each of the 23 counts, by the United States District Court, Newark, N.J.

In late 1978, Michael Gabriel—a veterinarian with USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service—reported to USDA's Office of Inspector General that Burke was offering him funds to relax the enforcement of USDA requirements. After reporting the incident, the Office of the Inspector General instructed Gabriel to accept payment so that evidence could be gathered to support a criminal action.

The payments amounted to over \$5,000 during a year and half period. However, Gabriel ensured that no unwholesome meat ever entered the food supply. Gabriel recently received USDA's Special Achievement Award for his role in aiding the investigation.

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GROCERY STORE FOOD PRICES ONLY 1.4 PERCENT ABOVE MAY 1982

WASHINGTON, June 22—Retail food prices in May rose 0.2 percent before seasonal adjustment, and were 2.4 percent above May a year ago, according to the monthly consumer price index released today by the U.S. Department of Labor.

According to Assistant Secretary of Agriculture William Lesher, food prices in May moderated the overall CPI which rose 0.5 percent. Prices for food bought in grocery stores rose 0.1 percent in May. The price levels for these foods were 1.4 percent above a year earlier. Prices for food away from home rose 0.2 percent in April and were 4.5 percent above May 1982. These changes reflect the continued moderation in food price increases expected this year, he said.

"The rise in food prices is likely to be the lowest in many years, reflecting abundant food supplies, slower increases in marketing costs, and low farm prices," Lesher said.

Retail meat prices decreased by 0.2 percent in May due to large supplies of pork. Pork prices fell 1.8 percent, more than offsetting a 0.7 percent rise in beef and veal prices.

Vegetable prices increased 1.5 percent, primarily the result of higher potato prices. With stocks of fall crop potatoes declining and the spring crop damaged by rain, potato prices rose 9 percent. Even so, potato prices were nearly 12 percent below year earlier levels.

Lettuce prices also rose in May due to supply shortages resulting from wet weather that delayed plantings earlier this year. Tomato prices and prices for other fresh vegetables declined in May.

Egg prices rose 3.9 percent in May, due largely to lower production, as producers responded to low farm prices. Poultry prices rose slightly due to increased demand for broilers for summer cookouts.

May Retail Food Prices, Percent Change for Selected Items

Not Items adjusted	April to May		
	May 1982 seasonally adjusted	Seasonally adjusted	to May 1983
<i>Percent change</i>			
All food	0.2	0.3	2.4
Food away from home	0.2	0.3	4.5
Food at home	0.1	0.3	1.4
Meats	-0.2	-0.4	1.1
Beef and veal	0.7	0.0	0.1
Pork	-1.8	-1.1	3.0
Other meats	-0.3	*	1.4
Poultry	0.5	*	-2.0
Eggs	3.9	12.0	5.5
Fish and seafood	-1.8	0.2	1.7
Dairy products	0.1	*	1.3
Fats and oils	-0.1	*	-0.9
Cereals and bakery prods.	0.2	*	3.0
Fruits and vegetables	1.1	1.0	0.1
Nonalcoholic beverages	-0.2	0.1	1.3
Sugar and sweets	0.0	*	2.0
Other prepared foods	0.1	*	3.6

* A seasonally adjusted index is not available for these items.

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CHEMICAL STIMULATES PARASITIC WASP TO LAY EGGS

WASHINGTON, June 23—A new chemical mixture stimulates a parasitic wasp species to lay eggs by the thousands—enough for biologically controlling many crop-damaging insect pests.

William C. Nettles, a U.S. Department of Agriculture entomologist, formulated the new egg-laying stimulant. It is a simple salt solution of potassium chloride and magnesium sulfate.

Nettles chose these salts because potassium and magnesium are present in relatively large amounts in insect blood.

That mixture, in certain formulations, proved an effective stimulant for the parasitic wasp *Trichogramma* in experiments that Nettles, Richard K. Morrison and others conducted at the USDA Agricultural Research Service's Cotton Insects Research Laboratory in College Station, Texas.

Trichogramma is present in nature but doesn't reproduce well enough to be effective for biological control, Nettles said.

His new chemical stimulant will overcome this obstacle to mass rearing the wasp for release in fields to protect such crops as cotton, corn, soybeans, vegetables, fruits and forest trees, said Terry B. Kinney, Jr., the research agency's administrator.

"We now have the basis for an inexpensive method of rearing and collecting many thousands of *Trichogramma* eggs," Kinney said.

An artificial diet for the wasp containing everything it needs to grow and mature has yet to be developed, he said. Scientists throughout the world are working on the problem because of the wasp's insect control potential.

Nettles said the Chinese grow the wasps on a natural diet consisting of insect blood, egg yolks, milk and salts. The diet is effective, but the use of insect blood is expensive and inefficient in the United States.

Trichogramma is an excellent biological control agent because it parasitizes eggs. It lays its eggs in the eggs of its host.

But the wasp eggs hatch before those of the host, attacking the host eggs and thus preventing the insect pests from ever hatching and damaging crop plants.

Nettles said Trichogramma preys on eggs of members of 75 insect families, including beetles, flies, and moths.

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CONTACT: William C. Nettles, Cotton Insects Research Laboratory, Agricultural Research Service, USDA, College Station, Texas 77841. Telephone (409) 260-9253.

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USDA TO TEST SYSTEM IN PENNSYLVANIA THAT ELIMINATES PAPER FOOD STAMPS

WASHINGTON, June 23—The U.S. Department of Agriculture has awarded a \$2.2 million contract to a McLean, Va., company to test a system in Reading, Pa., that eliminates paper food stamps.

Planning Research Corporation of McLean, Va., will use electronic technology to debit the amount of food stamp purchases in food stores.

"We're testing this system as a method to remove the opportunities for fraud presented by the paper coupon," Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Mary C. Jarratt said. "Once the negotiable documents are removed from the program, the possibility for illegal trafficking, mail fraud and lost and stolen coupons is eliminated."

The demonstration project is scheduled to run for 18 months following a pre-test period, Jarratt said.

Under the system, each food stamp household will get a magnetic card that has the recipient's picture, account number and biographical information laminated on it, Jarratt said. The household will also get a personal identification number that must be used with the card at the grocery store to verify use of the card.

At the grocery checkout station, checkers will insert the food stamp identification card into a computer terminal and recipients will enter their personal ID number into an accompanying keyboard to activate use of the card. If the card and the personal identification number match, recipients' accounts will be automatically debited by the amount

of the food purchases and the grocers' accounts at a designated bank will be credited with the same amount.

Various issuance systems are presently used in the food stamp program, each resulting in the issuance of paper coupons, Jarratt said. Most food stamp coupons are distributed through the mail, either directly or through authorization to participate cards that are mailed to participants, Jarratt said.

Recipients present the authorization card along with a program issued identification card to a food stamp issuance agent and receive their coupons. These systems often result in mail fraud, theft, lost and stolen authorization cards and coupons.

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EXTENSION HOMEMAKERS WIN FOUR OF NINE GREAT AMERICAN FAMILY AWARDS

WASHINGTON, June 24—Four of nine winning families of the first annual "Great American Family" awards program, sponsored by the American Family Society, were honored today at the U.S. Department of Agriculture because of their connection with USDA's Extension Service.

Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Orville Bentley said the families were selected on the basis of their exemplary family life and community service achievements.

"All of the women and one of the men in the four families are extension homemakers, part of USDA's Cooperative Extension Service network of a million highly trained extension volunteers who provide education and information to others in their communities," Bentley said.

The families are: Neva and Stephen Black, and their three children from Kenai, Alaska; Rebecca and David Kaluna Keala and their ten children, grandchildren and great grandchildren from Pukalani, Maui, Hawaii; Nellie and John Madison and their four children from Echo, Ore.; and Ramona and Larry McCord and their four children from Deatsville, Ala.

These families were also recognized June 22 at a White House ceremony for all nine winning families where they received certificates from Nancy Reagan, honorary chairperson of the awards program.

Mary Nell Greenwood, administrator of USDA's Extension Service, said the awards program is designed to highlight the celebration of National Family Week, celebrated each year during Thanksgiving Week. Next year's awards program will start at that time.

These organizations selected the winning families: The Armed Forces YMCA, Family Service Association of America, General Federation of Women's Clubs, National Association of Life Underwriters, National Extension Homemakers Council, National Urban League, and the United States Jaycees. The purpose of the awards program is to strengthen family relationships and contribute to the quality of American life through community services.

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Backgrounder

U.S. Department of Agriculture • Office of Governmental and Public Affairs

EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE TO HOUSEHOLDS, CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS

The U.S. Department of Agriculture donates food through its food distribution program to help meet the nutritional needs of low-income people. USDA is increasing the kinds and quantities of food available to cooperative emergency feeding facilities such as soup kitchens and to emergency feeding organizations for distribution to needy households. Funds under the 1983 Emergency Food Assistance Act have been made available for some of these activities.

Cooperative emergency feeding facilities will be eligible to receive \$75 million in USDA-donated commodities. Such facilities include soup kitchens, hunger centers and temporary shelters. The public and non-profit organizations will use the donated foods in meals they prepare for people they serve.

The \$75 million in commodities includes poultry products, pork, beef, fruits, vegetables and fish products. These are surplus commodities which are purchased by the USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service to relieve market surpluses.

The commodities will be allocated to areas of high unemployment based on national unemployment figures provided by the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. Each state will receive at least \$25,000 worth of commodities. A minimum funding level was established for those areas where numbers were not available on the number of unemployed persons.

Food will also be distributed to food banks and other charitable organizations that provide groceries, but not meals, to the needy. The commodities include dairy products, flour, honey, rice and cornmeal. These are price support commodities which exceed the amounts needed to carry out other commitments such as the payment-in-kind program. The availability of these commodities for distribution is contingent on the volume of government-owned surplus. Commodities are allocated to regional offices as determined by the secretary of agriculture.

In addition to providing donated foods, USDA also will provide

funds—\$50 million—to state agencies to help defray costs incurred by or on behalf of organizations distributing commodities directly to households or through congregate settings. Such funds may be used for storage and distribution of donated foods. Because the primary objective of the Jobs Bill is to assist low income and unemployed persons, the \$50 million will be allocated to each state on the basis of the number of unemployed persons. At least \$10 million of this money must be passed on by states to help meet the local costs of distributing food to people through emergency feeding organizations.

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